



**Twenty-eighth session of the Authority
of Heads of State and Government**

Accra, 19th January 2005

**DECISION A/DEC. 11/01/05 ADOPTING AN AGRICULTURAL
POLICY FOR THE ECONOMIC COMMUNITY OF WEST
AFRICAN STATES - ECOWAP**

THE AUTHORITY OF HEADS OF STATE AND GOVERNMENT,

MINDFUL of Articles 7, 8, and 9 of the ECOWAS Treaty establishing the Authority of Heads of State and Government and defining its composition and functions;

MINDFUL of Articles 2, 3, 5, 22, 23 and 25 of the said Treaty;

CONSIDERING the leading role of agriculture in the West African economy as well as the effects its development can have on the other sectors of activity;

CONSIDERING the importance of trade in agricultural produce in integrating the region into the international market;

CONSIDERING the overriding role of this sector, particularly through family farms, in reducing poverty and food insecurity at the family, national and regional levels, and the important agro-business related role that the private sector can play in creating jobs and improving productivity;

CONSIDERING the need to modernize agriculture in member ECOWAS States in order to increase productivity and agricultural supplies, meet the increasing food needs and create new jobs;

CONSIDERING the overriding role that agriculture plays in the development of the zone, in sustaining the vitality of the area, and in the management of natural resources and environmental conservation;

CONSIDERING the dominant position of women in the production, processing and marketing of agricultural products and the significance of these activities in the creation of wealth at both the microeconomic and macroeconomic levels, therefore necessitating their increased involvement in decision-making on policies, programmes and projects;

CONSIDERING the place accorded the agricultural sector on the one hand, and to the infrastructures conducive to the development of production and trade in agricultural produce, on the other hand, within the vision and priorities articulated at the continental level by NEPAD;



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CONSIDERING the decision made by the Heads of State and Government in Yamoussoukro in May 2002, entrusting ECOWAS with the task of coordinating and monitoring the implementation of NEPAD in West Africa;

CONSIDERING the dynamics of cooperation between ECOWAS, UEMOA and CILSS, which seek to fully harmonise their strategies and policies in the sector, in order to integrate all ECOWAS member States;

FULLY AWARE of the difficulties encountered with national agricultural policies in improving producers' environment and making available to them the innovations, technologies or advice that they require, and the role regional cooperation can play in these areas;

JUDGING as particularly alarming, the environmental problems posed by agricultural development in a highly urbanized environment devoid of an improvement in the production systems despite the continued degradation of the forest cover and soil depletion;

CONVINCED that the disparities between the agricultural zones of the Community arising from agro-ecological constraints, their landlocked or insular nature, constitute an obstacle to the harmonious integration of the region at the economic, social and political levels;

RECALLING the commitment made in Maputo in July 2003 by the Authority of Heads of State and Government of the African Union, to allocate at least 10 % of national budgets to the development of the agricultural sector in order to improve productivity and reduce food insecurity;

UPON THE RECOMMENDATION of the session of the Council of Ministers held in Accra, from 16 to 18 January 2005;

DECIDES

ARTICLE 1

The West African Agricultural Policy of the Economic Community of West African States, known as ECOWAP, is hereby adopted, as attached.

ARTICLE 2

1. The Heads of State and Government commit:
 - a. The ECOWAS Executive Secretariat to take all necessary measures to effectively implement this decision, and in particular, to define more precisely the plan of action, the institutional structure, the financing system and lastly the monitoring and evaluation mechanism;

.../



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- b. The Member states to harmonise their national agricultural policies with the regional policy and to place emphasis on those aspects that depend mainly on interventions at the national level.
2. They invite:
- a. The other regional integration or cooperation organizations to align their strategies, policies and programs in the agricultural, food and natural resource management sectors with the guiding principles and priorities of the West African Agricultural Policy;
- b. All private sector stakeholders and socio-professional organizations to actively take part in the implementation, monitoring and evaluation of this policy.

ARTICLE 3

The detailed contents of the attached Agricultural Policy of the Economic Community of West African States shall form part and parcel of this decision.

ARTICLE 4

This Decision shall be published by the Executive Secretariat in the Official Journal of the Community within thirty (30) days of its signature by the Chairman of the Authority. It shall also be published by each Member State in its Official Gazette within the same time frame.

DONE AT ACCRA, THIS 19TH DAY OF JANUARY 2005

**H. E. JOHN AGYEKUM KUFUOR
CHAIRMAN**

FOR THE AUTHORITY

**ECONOMIC COMMUNITY OF
WEST AFRICAN STATES**



**COMMUNAUTÉ ECONOMIQUE
DES ETATS DE L'AFRIQUE
DE L'OUEST**

**Twenty-Eight Ordinary Summit of the Authority
of Heads of State and Government**

Accra, 19 January, 2005

**ANNEX TO DECISION A/DEC.11/01/05 RELATING TO THE
ECONOMIC COMMUNITY OF WEST AFRICAN STATES
AGRICULTURAL POLICY (ECOWAP)**

**Executive Secretariat
Accra, January, 2005**

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1. Context

The agricultural sector constitutes a determining component of the economy of West Africa, as much due to the size of its contribution to wealth, employment, and food security within the region as to the place of the sub-region on international markets.

It contributes as much as 35% of regional GDP as well as 15.3% of all goods and services exports of the region.

The agricultural sector is the principal source of employment for the West African region: 60% of all West Africans live in rural areas and draw most of their resources from agricultural activities. In addition, 65% of active workers, of which more than half are women, work in the agricultural sector, mostly in the area of production.

Women occupy an important place in the production, processing and marketing processes of agricultural produce, but are inadequately represented and taken care of in decisions on decisions, programmes and projects that also concern them.

Meanwhile, West African agriculture is characterized by low productivity. Agricultural yields are extremely low in general. This weak performance is attributable to several factors: institutional weaknesses; ecological and land tenure constraints, weak use of innovative technologies, disengagement of the States, without any support measures, effects of political conflicts, and the impact of the international environment.

Poverty and food insecurity, which characterize 30% and 17% respectively of the population, affect rural areas more harshly than urban; vulnerable groups include women, children, and the aged. This impacts the capacity for productive investment in the household, and in particular in the agricultural sector.

The satisfaction of regional food needs rests in large part on local production and imports mostly from the rest of the world. Imports of food products constitute 19% of all ECOWAS imports.

New prospects are appearing thanks to research and development in agricultural biotechnologies. This technical revolution opens new opportunities for increasing output and reducing the vulnerability of plant and animal species to the hazards of climate and diseases, provided that bio-safety risks and risks associated with dependence on seed supplies are kept in check.

In light of these challenges, Article 25.2 (h) of the Revised ECOWAS Treaty stipulates that the Member States agree to move towards the adoption and implementation of a common agricultural policy.

In application of this agreement, the ECOWAS Ministerial Commission for Food and Agriculture adopted in 2001 in Bamako the principal elements of an orientation framework for the aforesaid policy and instructed the Executive Secretariat to commission a study leading to the preparation of this policy.



This Economic Community of West Africa Agricultural Policy (ECOWAP) should define the principles and objectives related to the agricultural sector, the orientation of agricultural development, and the axes of intervention through which the sub-region will exploit its potential to assure:

- sustainable food security in the Member States;
- decent remuneration for agricultural workers;
- expansion of trade on a sustainable basis as much within the region as with the rest of the world.

ECOWAP should constitute an instrument for harmonizing and integrating targeted objectives, via diverse strategies and programmes, of the countries and inter-governmental organizations of the sub-region. This includes in particular, the agricultural policy of UEMOA (the PAU), which concerns its eight member countries who are all also members of ECOWAS, the Strategic framework for sustainable food security aimed at fighting against poverty in the sahel, involving the nine member States of CILSS, seven of which are also members of ECOWAS, the sub-regional programme of action against desertification, which covers all the countries of West Africa and Chad. This gradual integration will make it possible to avoid duplication of efforts in the pursuit of common objectives.

To reach this goal, ECOWAS provided for the formulation of ECOWAP as a participatory process of consultation and negotiation between national governments; socio-professional (ROPPA, RECAO) and civil society stakeholders; the principal regional organizations for economic integration; the institutions involved in agricultural, food and environmental cooperation.

The West African agricultural policy is also consistent with the implementation of NEPAD, undertaken by ECOWAS for the region of West Africa. ECOWAP, which contributes to the achievement of NEPAD objectives, can thus benefit from the investments and other elements that NEPAD seeks to promote.

2. Vision

The West African agricultural policy is set within the perspective of a modern and sustainable agriculture based on effective and efficient family farms and the promotion of agricultural enterprises through the involvement of the private sector. Once productivity and competitiveness on the intra-community and international markets are achieved, the policy should be able to guarantee food security and secure decent incomes for agricultural workers.

3. Challenges for the agricultural policy

With regard to the present characteristics of the agricultural sector and its importance for the economy and the regional population, the challenges for the ECOWAP are essentially in three areas.

The first major challenge is to adequately feed a West African population more and more numerous and increasingly urbanized. The agricultural policy of the community, to satisfy the food needs of this growing population, opts above all to increase development of regional availability.

The second challenge concerns the promotion of sustainable development, both socially and environmentally.

- Socially, this involves reversing the tendency towards increased poverty among farmers and creating a rural life that is attractive for them. It also involves fighting against the major pandemics, such as HIV/AIDS, malaria, river blindness, which impede production.

- Environmentally, it involves promoting sustainable management of natural resources by relying on production systems that are productive and also respect the environment. These systems should exploit the largely undeveloped potential that exists for land management, irrigation, and innovative technology.

The third challenge involves the construction of a strong regional market and the presence of West African agriculture in the international market. WTO, Economic Partnership Agreements (EPA) with the European Union (EU-ACP) as well as the Africa Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA).

4. Coverage of ECOWAP

The West Africa agricultural policy covers, in conformity with the Revised ECOWAS Treaty, all production of the agriculture, livestock, and fishing, sectors, along with forestry and natural resource management.

5. Objectives

5.1. General objective

The overall objective sought by the West African Agricultural Policy (ECOWAP) is to "contribute in a sustainable way to meeting the food needs of the population, to economic and social development, to the reduction of poverty in the Member States, and thus to reduce existing inequalities among territories, zones and nations."

5.2. Specific objectives

This general objective can be broken down into seven specific objectives:

Specific Objective n.1: to ensure food security for the rural and urban population of West Africa and the health quality of its products, following an approach that guarantees food sovereignty for the region;

Specific Objective n.2: to reduce dependence on imports by granting priority to food production and processing and by developing regional complementarities and

comparative advantage, while taking into account the particular circumstances of zones and countries linked to their insular or land-locked location;

Specific Objective n. 3: to support the equitable economic and commercial integration of agricultural enterprises into national, regional, and international markets, so as to improve rural incomes, and notably the incomes of females;

Specific Objective n.4: to develop human capacities, create employment and incomes upstream and downstream of production, and to contribute to the development of services in the rural sector (including those in the health area, especially the fight against HIV/AIDS, malaria and other family related diseases and hazards, etc.) in order to improve the living conditions of the rural population and in particular of the women;

Specific Objective n.5: to ensure intensification of production systems, appropriate to the different agro-ecological contexts, in order to ensure an increase in production while developing and preserving natural resources and biodiversity;

Specific Objective n. 6: to contribute to the reduction of the vulnerability of West African economies and to reduce the factors of instability and of regional insecurity, in particular those relating to natural disasters or tied to peace, security, and good governance;

Specific objective n.7: to provide West African Agriculture with appropriate funding mechanisms to meet the diversity of farming systems and the various investment needs.

6. Guiding principles

The construction of regional integration is a long and complex process. It rests on a few guiding principles that sector policies must try to translate into reality.

The principle of **subsidiarity** according to which one treats at the regional level only that which cannot be better addressed at a lower level, national or local. This principle implies, among other things, that "national jurisdiction is the rule, community jurisdiction the exception".

The principle of **proportionality**, which implies that the action of the community should not exceed that which is necessary to realize the objectives of the Treaty. Its application must, among other things, avoid imposing on member countries rules that are too stringent or efforts too great relative to those that would be reasonable or effective.

The principle of **complementarity** permits taking into account of the comparative advantage of different countries and productive sectors, as well as bringing a geographic dimension to agricultural policy, at the same time that it also permits discretionary public investment and external aid.

The principle of **regionality** according to which the Community deals only with issues that concern at least two Member States

The principle of **solidarity** according to which the Community guarantees a minimum level of cohesion between its members and provides common financial, human, and institutional resources to reduce the disparities that exist between the members;

The principle of **partnership and consultation** assures the permanent involvement of stakeholders in the agricultural sector in the implementation, monitoring and evaluation, and eventual reform of the West Africa agricultural policy. The search for synergy and efficiency in the implementation of different strategies suggests a sharing of responsibilities based on the experience and knowledge of the different stakeholders and institutions working in the sector.

The principle of **progressivity** involves moving forward gradually so as to take into account different national circumstances and particular interests.

7. Axes of intervention

Interventions to attain the objectives of ECOWAP fall along three major axes:

- Increasing the productivity and competitiveness of West African agriculture;
- Implementing a trade regime within West Africa;
- Adapting the trade regime vis-à-vis countries outside the region.

The first of these axes focuses on improving food security, increasing farmer incomes, and reducing poverty at the level of the farm and rural community, while the second and third axes are directed towards assuring access to regional and international markets in order to sell productions resulting from an increase in the supply side, made possible by the adoption of modern farming systems.

7.1. Increasing productivity and competitiveness of agriculture

Increasing the productivity and competitiveness of agriculture requires modernization of farming, development of agro-food chains, managing shared resources, and prevention and management of famine and the management of the effects of natural disasters.

7.1.1. Modernization of farming

Modernization of farming practices is necessary in order to make agriculture more productive and competitive. This is achieved primarily by making modern inputs accessible to the farmer, through agricultural research and dissemination, and by increasing the knowledge and capacity of rural enterprises. This modernization should primarily concern the family farm taking into account its social role. The other types of farming are also taken into account.

The modernization of agriculture should go hand in hand with land tenure security within the framework of settlement rights. The development of water control, as well as water and soil conservation activities, the improvement of soil fertility are as many important levers to ensure this modernization.

7.1.1.1 Agricultural inputs and equipment



Modern agriculture requires that farmers have access to inputs such as fertilizer, improved seeds, phytosanitary products, farm equipment, water, land, and labor. For farmers to purchase these inputs, both equity capital and rural finance are required, the latter comprising both working capital and term loans.

There are important regional dimensions to improving access to agricultural inputs, finance, land, and labor. Some of these have to do with establishing the rules and regulations that ensure access through well functioning markets. There are also investments that can be made in infrastructure, knowledge, and institutions. Development of regional capital markets expands access to regional finance for agriculture and agro-industry

7.1.1.2 Agricultural research and dissemination of findings

Agricultural research and the dissemination of its results is essential to the process of transforming production, processing, and storage. Agricultural research should be promoted at the regional level. There are existing initiatives for regional coordination in research, e.g., CORAF/WECARD, the Sahel Institute, but there is a continuing need to rationalize agricultural research and develop the logistics for specialization and cooperation among the national and international centers of agro-economic research (ICRISAT, IITA, ADRAO, etc). ECOWAS will work with the regional institutions for which it has a mandate to develop an elaborate program for revitalizing research and evaluating the results and the transfer of technological, technical and social innovations.

Special attention should be paid to research in agricultural biotechnologies in order to make maximum use of the opportunities offered by these innovations so as to benefit from them, while taking the most care, in view of the possible risks.

7.1.1.3 Building human capacity

Parallel to research, there is a need to build human capacity. This requires formal training as well as hands-on practical experience. There is an important role for training at the regional level in order to avoid duplication and for sharing educational experience.

7.1.2. Development of agricultural and agro-food chains

Development of agro-food chains is an important means of assuring demand for agricultural production and growth of rural incomes. Given the importance of agriculture in regional economic development and in the fight against poverty, the agricultural policy will actively support the development of:

important chains for food security: foodstuff chains

export chains on the international markets: coffee, cocoa, cotton, [REDACTED], tropical fruits, oleaginous fruits, etc

strategic chains at the regional level: cattle-beef chains, fish, dairy products, fruits and vegetables (mangoes, onions, tomatoes, etc);

strategic chains, having regard to the preservation of natural resources and the environment: timber and forestry products, maritime resources.

There are important areas in which the principle of regional subsidiarity is clear:

Development of processing, storage and preservation;
Harmonization and standardization of sanitary and phytosanitary norms.
Infrastructure at the regional level.
Support for the organization of stakeholders and promotion of regional dialogue.

7.1.2.1. Development of processing, storage and preservation

The promotion of high performing agro-food value chains at the regional level involves the development of processing, storage and preservation as well as distribution networks for agricultural and food products. For the food value chains, this represents a vector for reducing losses, adaptation to the consumer needs and increase in value added. The regional level will act as an incentive for research and technology transfer as regards storage and processing, and also for the promotion of investment in food processing, storage and preservation industries. For the exports products, the regional level will encourage pooling of investments and technology transfer for the processing of raw materials, making it possible to enhance the value of the products on overseas markets.

7.1.2.2. Harmonizing sanitary and phytosanitary norms and standards

The harmonization of norms and standards for the production and usage of products and inputs is a mechanism for regulation of regional and international trade, since it defines the requirements for fair competition among producers at the same time that it protects consumers against abusive and dangerous practices. Imposition and enforcement of norms and standards normally applies to food, veterinary products, and agricultural chemicals. Some Member States of ECOWAS already have an active role in Codex Alimentarius, which monitors international food safety standards. For veterinary products, UEMOA has in place a harmonized system for authorizing market entrance (AMM) and has invested in the establishment of a regional regulatory agency that will manage the AMM in a centralized way. This agency could widen its area of competence to all of ECOWAS. Regarding agricultural chemicals, most ECOWAS countries are signatories of the ICPP. CILSS has already begun to play a role in this area analogous to that of the UEMOA agency for veterinary products. It will be the responsibility of the Executive Secretariat to harness these achievements for the benefit of the entire West African region. The implementation of this programme will make it possible to guarantee production and high quality supplies to producers and consumers.

7.1.2.3. Development of production and commercial infrastructure

Regional investments must allow for the realization of economies of scale and support for the development of comparative advantage. ECOWAS will support the development of infrastructure for urban development, irrigation, energy, storage, cross-border trade, and exports.

Strengthening information systems

The agricultural policy will also assist in the extension of information systems throughout West Africa. An information strategy in the region must be based on several pillars:

Information on agricultural production (area, output, yields);
Market information (producer and consumer prices, quality standards).
Comparability, aggregation, update and maintenance of data within the region.

7.1.2.5. Organization of stakeholders and promotion of dialogue

National organizational structures, whether in the form of inter-professional associations or vertical coordination among stakeholders, need to be linked at the regional level. Some product chain organizations of producers (e.g., poultry farming, oilseeds) have joined together in federations. Regional organization initiatives also exist on a general basis (ROPPA, RECAO) as well as on the basis of common economic problems (rice, cotton), and certain national organizations act as drivers at the regional level (potatoes).

The dialogue at the regional level can equip ECOWAS with the necessary impetus to carry out its missions. These include (i) the classification of products and application of tariff rules concerning the established categories, (ii) harmonization of fiscal regulations and of norms and standards, (iii) promotion of product chains of regional importance on external markets; (iv) definition of investment policy at the regional level.

7.1.3 Management of shared resources

Agricultural development should rest on the adoption of farming systems that guarantee a sustainable management of natural resources. This depends mainly on policies at the national level. However, action is required at the regional level in two areas:

the harmonization of norms and standards on risky factors of production;
the definition of common rules for the management of shared resources.

In effect, beyond the economic interdependencies connected to the regionalization of markets, cultivation, livestock, fisheries, and forestry together use common resources. The common management of resources is an important issue with regard to the goals for agricultural development and the management of natural resources and prevention of conflicts of use. The issue of these resources also depends on the preservation of ecosystems and of biodiversity in natural areas.

7.1.3.1 Transhumance and protection of pasture and croplands

Transhumance is a traditional way to develop natural resources in an economically efficient way. It allows for herds to move back and forth between agro-ecological zones at different times of the year. But pastoral herding also creates problems related to the reduction of available grazing space because of population growth, the extension of cultivation, and the absence of a viable strategy for intensification. ECOWAS has

conceived of a regional program targeted on the problem of transhumance. It includes several dimensions:

the installation of transhumance corridors and areas for grazing (water holes, etc.),
prevention and health guarantees (cattle passport),
definition of usage rules and regulations for conflicts, etc.

7.1.3.2 Management of water and river basins

The management of water resources is one of the more strategic challenges for the coming decades. Competition for water will become crucial among domestic, agricultural, and industrial uses. In addition to groundwater resources, the main part of the area's fresh water resources concerns rivers. They cross over several countries and essentially represent a common resource. Although regional river basin authorities exist (e.g., OMVS, ABN), their viability varies. It is essential that these authorities be revitalized in order to partition water resources among countries, ensure the preservation of upstream watersheds, and assure the sustainable use of this precious resource.

7.1.4 Preventing and managing famine and other natural disasters

There are a number of existing institutions and projects that assist in preventing and managing famine and natural disasters in the region (CILSS). These institutions and projects need to be strengthened and their actions in collecting and disseminating information be extended to the entire region. These actions relate mainly to the:

Vulnerability of populations in respect of access to food;
Early warning of production shortfalls;
Connection between deficit and surplus production zones;
Animal health and phytosanitary protection;
Natural disaster prevention and management (desert locust, drought, floods, etc.).
Management of post-conflict food crises.

These institutions and projects also need to be strengthened in their ability to manage buffer stocks and more generally food crises.

7.1.5 Funding of Agriculture

The weakness of mechanisms to finance upstream and downstream agricultural activities constitutes a veritable obstacle. The regional agricultural policy will help to provide agriculture with the appropriate financing mechanisms that meet the needs of the different stakeholders.

Financing of agriculture will be at several levels:

financing of agricultural activity itself (i.e. farms): this rests principally on public and private mechanisms and resources (the banking sector) mobilized at the national level;
mobilization of funds to improve the production environment and that of the chains:
regional programmes (regional public property) targeted by research, dissemination of



results, infrastructures, etc. Funding shall come from ECOWAS own funds and external sources;

financing of private-sector based regional activities: production and distribution of inputs, processing, preservation of products from the regional chains, etc. Resources for this purpose will come mainly from the private sector.

7.1. Implementation of the trade regime within the community

A free trade area already exists on paper within ECOWAS, but the biggest constraints on regional trade in agricultural products are not tariffs but non-tariff barriers. To deal with some of these, the regional institutions implement a Regional Transport and Transit Facilitation Program. There are also extensive problems with customs administration, transportation infrastructure, and transportation and communications regulations.

The harmonization of the internal tax policy and the promotion of tax incentives constitute an important lever for the development of productions and markets, while avoiding distortions of competition within the community area.

ECOWAS actions in those fields are essential for the effective implementation of the ECOWAP.

7.2. Adaptation of trade regime with outside countries

The formulation of a regional agricultural policy for ECOWAS must take into account the fact that many of the parameters of this policy have already been determined by the customs union established under the West African Economic and Monetary Union (WAEMU/UEMOA), which is currently being extended to ECOWAS as a whole.

The general principles of this custom union are already agreed to by the ECOWAS Heads of State and Government. The negotiations with the non-WAEMU members are pursued during the transition period of 2005-07 to take on board the agricultural and food concerns.

The use of a customs union to achieve economies of scale within the ECOWAS region of West Africa is highly desirable. However, special measures are necessary for some agricultural products. This will involve differential protection and negotiations within WTO.

7.3.1 Differential protection for agricultural products

West Africa is severely frustrated by the policies of the industrial countries that undermine world prices for such products as cotton, sugar, oilseeds and livestock products, etc in which the region might have a comparative advantage in the absence of these policies. Without a viable WTO agreement on agriculture, which would reduce or eliminate production and other such industrial country subsidies, unilateral protective action at the regional level is justified as a way of compensating for distortions in the world market. Similar differential protection may be warranted for uncertainties associated with global market trends and where vulnerable populations may be injured.

Such protection is also justified by the need to protect investment for some agro-food chains in which the region has potential comparative advantages.

This differential protection must be adapted to the internal and external situation specific to each agricultural product. The tax policy at the borders should help create an enabling and stable trade environment to make the development of the value chains more secure.

7.2.2. Harmonization of negotiating positions

Just as the creation of a single regional market implies coordination among countries, so opening up to the world market implies the acceptance of a certain level of delegation to regional authorities for relationships with third parties involving tariff bindings, rules of access, norms and standards, and other elements of the international trade regime. ECOWAS can only defend the common position of its Member States if the principles of equity and solidarity among countries are respected. This requires avoiding competitive distortions among countries due to unfair practices and accepting implementation of decisions taken by common agreement.

As with all regional political authorities, ECOWAS is not currently entitled to ratify decisions on its own without having the Member States as signatories to the agreements. It is appropriate, however, to lay out a mandate for negotiation entrusted to the ECOWAS Secretariat.

8. Implementation

The West African agricultural policy involves the Community and all of the Member States. It communicates a regional consensus on the goals assigned to agriculture and on the dimensions of agricultural policy and investment programs that result from a regional approach. Its implementation rests on two major approaches:

formulation of regional development programs;

adoption and implementation of common rules and regulations.

This implies an important task of consultation and coordination among the different departments in ECOWAS so that the agricultural choices and concerns are addressed as part of the policies and plans for regional integration, particularly the Customs Union.

8.1. Financing Instruments

All of the areas within the agricultural policy do not require special financing for their implementation. This is particularly the case with policies related to integration and external trade, for which implementation depends primarily on regulation and not on investment. On the other hand, several programs require additional funding.

In order to facilitate financial resources flowing in support of ECOWAP, it will be useful to establish an ECOWAS Agricultural Development Fund (ECOWADF). It will be funded by the Community's own resources and by donors who want to channel resources into regional agricultural programs within the framework of ECOWAP.

Appropriate economic policies instruments must be deployed to strengthen production infrastructures and create the voluntary incentive conditions for a sustainable agriculture.

The West African agricultural policy must be articulated with respect to the development strategy supported within NEPAD, whose implementation is also assured by ECOWAS for the region of West Africa.

8.2. Institutional Structure

The ECOWAS agricultural policy arises out of the normal institutional structure for implementation of sectorial community policies. Its implementation is the responsibility of the ECOWAS.

The participatory process that preceded the defining of the ECOWAP allowed for building a wide consensus on the diagnostics, vision, directions, and content of the West African agricultural policy. This participation of stakeholders alongside public figures will also comprise a key element of the implementation of the agricultural policy.

The importance of the participation of stakeholders in the agricultural and agro-food sectors suggests the desirability of establishing a consultative committee. This consultative committee will bring together stakeholders organized at the regional level, which represent the agricultural producers and professional organizations, agro-food enterprises and research institutions, and other intergovernmental organizations for integration and technical cooperation. It could meet at the same time as the Commission for Food and Agriculture, representing the Member States.

8.3. Monitoring and Evaluation

Monitoring and Evaluation will be a key element of the implementation and refinement of ECOWAP. This will be carried out by the ECOWAS Executive Secretariat in collaboration with the consultative committee of stakeholders. Monitoring-Evaluation will be overseen by the Ministerial Commission for Food and Agriculture, which will meet periodically with the consultative committee to review progress in the implementation of ECOWAP and to approve modifications that may be needed.

8.4 Requisite conditions

In order to effectively implement ECOWAP, the following indispensable conditions will be required:

- the taking into account of the gender approach in all actions under ECOWAP, particularly in order to enable women occupy their rightful place and benefit mainly from already undertaken actions;
- a strong political will and all inputs emanating from both the Governments and ECOWAS, which make it possible to boost and support the



implementation of agricultural policy actions at the national and regional levels;

- a very wide information and sensitization of all public and private stakeholders at all levels, on the orientation, objectives and intervention axes of ECOWAP in order to facilitate the acceptance of the West African population and to promote its implementation.

